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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of demographic and educational attainment data on Latinos in Ventura County, California, and describes an ongoing initiative to increase Latino college attendance through improved K-12 preparation and family involvement. In both its urban and rural areas, Ventura County harbors large Latino populations who are predominantly Spanish-speaking and poor and who have low rates of high school graduation and college attendance. The county's community colleges provide a "second chance" for students to gain access to California's 4-year university systems. Data are presented on the educational "pipeline" schools in the service areas of Ventura College and Oxnard College, including overall and Latino enrollment, percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, percentage limited-English-speaking, student enrollment in advanced math and science courses, graduation rates, percentage of graduates eligible to enter California universities, and transfers from community colleges to universities. The program "ENLACE y Avance" aims to improve Latino achievement in selected areas of the county by strengthening several foundations of academic success. Strategies include: intensive outreach efforts to enhance family involvement and parent empowerment, with the aim of drawing on the strengths of Latino family structure and social capital. At the same time, educators, parents, and community activists are working to coordinate existing educational best practices for the benefit of underachieving Latino students. (SV)

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Latinos and Education in Ventura County

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In 1960, approximately 3.5 million people of Mexican origin lived in the U.S.; this figure rose to 13.4 million by 1990 (Gutierrez 1996). Growth rates for the overall Latino population were similar in magnitude. Locally, by 1996, nearly one in three of all Californians was of Latino descent. According to some demographers, if these trends continue, nearly half (49.7 percent) of all Californians will be of Latino descent by the year 2040 (Rosenblatt 1996).

Contemporary migration patterns indicate there will be substantial continued growth in the Latino population in California which points to the need to develop effective approaches to facilitate the socio-economic well-being of this burgeoning community. There are a number of challenges, however, to this goal including limited English proficiency of migrants, and low educational access to higher education of Latino immigrants and their children, both of which contribute to the occupational segregation of this population into low-paying jobs. With respect to the mobility chances of this community, education is critical to analyze both to identify institutional weaknesses within the schools as well as possible points of entry to the curricular corridors of academic excellence for Latino children. Equally important is developing the potential for educational empowerment within Latino families. These may be daunting goals, but they have precedents nationally and locally as this paper will demonstrate.

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This paper provides an overview of Latinos' educational needs in Ventura County with an emphasis on the city of Oxnard and the rural "Highway 126 corridor" that stretches from the city of Ventura across Santa Paula to Rancho Sespe/Piru. This overview forms the backdrop for a new educational research and outreach program, "ENLACE y *Avance*: Students and Families Empowered for Success," co-directed by Richard Duran, J. Manuel Casas and myself that involves over 30 community-based organizations, schools, business organizations, Santa Barbara City College, Ventura College, and Oxnard College. Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for four years for a total amount of 1.5 million dollars, this program is the only University of California ENLACE project and one of 13 ENLACE projects nationwide to receive such support. The overarching goal of the national and local ENLACE programs is to reverse the historic under-representation of Latinos in higher education by increasing their academic preparation across the K-12 continuum leading to greater college enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. Locally, *ENLACE y Avance* draws on research on the importance of the development of social capital, family empowerment, and institutional change to develop more a more effective social context for Latino educational attainment.

My paper begins with an overview of the social and educational environment for Latinos in Ventura and Oxnard. (NOTE: I do not analyze the Santa Barbara setting given the Ventura county emphasis of this conference.) I provide an analysis of the educational status of Latino students and families in both rural settings and more urban contexts. This is followed by an overview of current *ENLACE y Avance* educational objectives and family empowerment strategies currently underway in the county. I conclude with a

preliminary note on the significance of *ENLACE y Avance* to research on Latino families and education.

Ventura County is home to ten incorporated cities. Five of these cities are involved with the *ENLACE y Avance* program include Fillmore, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Ventura, and Santa Paula. Each of these cities has distinct features, economic, social, and cultural, that distinguish each community; however, each shares an urgent need to improve the educational attainment of Latinos. In Ventura County, there are approximately 86,873 county residents living in unincorporated areas, primarily in rural areas. Rancho Sespe, an extremely isolated, rural housing complex for one hundred farm working families is one such area. No public schools, medical services, or commerce are within walking distance; lack of public transportation often precludes students from staying after school to take advantage of academic enrichment or extracurricular activities. All Rancho Sespe residents are Latino and the vast majority are Spanish-speaking only. All are low income; indeed, of the 179 Rancho Sespe students in the Fillmore Unified District, 90 percent are from families that meet the federal poverty index for receipt of free meals.

In addition to serving these high-need families, *ENLACE y Avance* is working in UCSB partnership high schools in rural Fillmore and Santa Paula, and the bi-modal Nordhoff high school in the small, outlying community of Ojai. I should note that partnership high schools are those who have a signed agreement with U.C. Santa Barbara and are eligible to receive specially designed student outreach and educational support, as well as teacher professional development opportunities, to augment their curriculum given the high poverty indexes, low college-going rates, and low test scores of these

schools. Nordhoff High School, on the other hand, is a bimodal school meaning that it is characterized by an institutional structure of excellence including high availability of college preparatory classes and high test scores but low college-going rate of Latino students. The overall goal of partnerships with local schools is to increase U.C. eligibility rates in those schools.

Ventura College is an important educational provider for both rural and more urban communities in the county. In 1999-2000, approximately 12,055 students were enrolled full time at Ventura College. Of this number, 33 percent, or 3,940 were Latino. To try and improve rural Ventura County's access to higher education, the College operates an East Campus located in Santa Paula. Transportation in this area is a major problem. It takes approximately 45 minutes to travel from rural Piru/Rancho Sespe to Ventura College. There is no system of public transportation in this area, which limits access to this two-year college to individuals able to access cars. Many residents of Piru/Rancho Sespe have never visited either Ventura College or U.C. Santa Barbara. Higher education to this community is often a far-away dream.

Ventura's rurality contrasts with the more urban environment of Oxnard. The City of Oxnard has approximately 151,000 residents, 62 percent of whom are Latino. With regard to employment and income, Latinos are highly concentrated in low paid, low skilled, service sector jobs. According to the California Department of Education, almost 80 percent of the Oxnard Elementary District's approximately 16,000 students are Latino and almost 50 percent are limited English proficient; 58 percent of Oxnard Union High District students are Latino.

Oxnard College enrolled 7,639 full time students in 1999-2000. Almost three-fourths of Oxnard College students are students of color; more than half are Latino. Oxnard is the youngest and smallest of the Ventura County Community College District's three colleges. Due to "Tidal Wave II" population growth, the college expects its enrollment to double by 2010. Because the college's funding base is restricted by Proposition 13, a voter initiative passed in the 1980s, resources—already sorely inadequate—will not keep pace with growth. With high dropout rates, low transfer rates to four-year colleges, and, until recently, high turnover among administrators (which compromises college leadership), the college has been somewhat marginalized and characterized as a "remedial college." As home to the place-bound working poor, it is the only community college in California with a State Job and Career Center on its campus.

In summary, Ventura County harbors large Latino populations that are predominantly Spanish-speaking and poor. Each region's Latino residents suffer the silent but systematic discrimination that occurs through under-education. However, despite their poverty, Latinos in this community possess "funds of knowledge" (Moll and Greenberg 1990) and other social capital assets that can be utilized in educational enrichment and empowerment activities.[2] The goal of the *ENLACE y Avance* effort is to use the assets as powerful tools to improve family involvement in schooling and students' own academic progress in collaboration with teachers and school administrators.

Educational Data

In this section I provide educational data organized according to the service area of each respective community college in Ventura and Oxnard, to illustrate the context for Latino education in this area. I also provide qualitative data on school and community needs and assets based on interviews with informants at each community college, three

school district administrators, 5 community-based agencies, and one parent meeting at Rancho Sespe facilitated by the community based organization, Future Leaders of America. This data provides insight into the challenges and barriers faced by Latino communities in this area, and pinpoint critical weaknesses in the K-16 pipelines that *ENLACE y Avance* must address.

The majority of pipeline schools are low-performing schools, as identified by the UC Outreach Task Force, with high levels of Latino enrollment (see Table 1). As mentioned earlier, the one high school with a relatively low level of Latino enrollment (Nordhoff High) is a bi-modal as opposed to a low-performing school. (In bi-modal schools, the above average performance of white and high-income students masks the poor performance of minority and low-income students.) It is important to note that of the more than thirteen thousand Latino students in the local districts, almost 4,000 have been designated as limited English proficient.

Table 1: 1999–2000 Enrollments at *ENLACE y Avance* Pipeline Schools:
Data source for all tables = California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit

	Total Enrolled	*Latino Enrolled*		*Limited English (Spanish-speaking)*		
		#	*% total enr*	*#*	*% Latino enr*	*% total enr*
Ventura College Service Area						
Piru Elementary	386	301	78%	180	60%	47%
Fillmore Middle	885	674	76%	268	40%	30%
Fillmore Senior	1,008	773	77%	125	16%	12%
Isbell Middle	1,071	889	83%	180	20%	20%
Santa Paula High	1,505	1,220	81%	238	20%	16%
Nordhoff High	1,253	233	19%	38	16%	3%
Oxnard College Service Area						
Kamala Elementary	937	842	90%	597	71%	64%
Haydock Intermediate	840	710	85%	399	56%	48%
Channel Islands High	2,857	2,012	70%	634	32%	22%
Hueneme High	2,654	2,020	76%	600	30%	23%
TOTAL	**13,396**	**9,674**	**72.2%**	**3,359**	**34.7%**	**25%**

Table 2 - 1999–2000 Demographic Data on *ENLACE y Avance* Pipeline Schools

	Total Enrolled	*Free Meals* #	*Free Meals* % total enr	*Parent Ed Level*
Ventura College Service Area				
Piru Elementary	386	289	75%	2.58
Fillmore Middle	885	516	58%	2.26
Fillmore Senior	1,008	444	44%	2.31
Isbell Middle	1,071	761	71%	2.18
Santa Paula High	1,505	814	54%	2.22
Nordhoff High	1,253	231	18%	3.40
Oxnard College Service Area				
Kamala Elementary	937	825	88%	2.69
Haydock Intermediate	840	590	70%	2.15
Channel Islands High	2,857	1,006	35%	2.25
Hueneme High	2,654	1,318	50%	2.06
TOTAL	**13,396**	**6,794**	**50.7%**	

*This number represents the average of parent responses where 1 = not high school graduate, 2 = high school graduate, 3 = some college, 4 = college graduate, 5 = graduate school

Table 2 illustrates that local feeder schools to the two community colleges evidenced relatively low levels of average parent education and poverty, the latter measured by percent eligible for reduced meals at school. Only the bi-modal school has average parent education levels equal to "some college." In general, Latino parents, with limited education and limited-to-no English proficiency, work in low-skilled, low-paid service sector and agricultural jobs. The resultant low socioeconomic status of Latino families in this area is reflected in the large number and proportion of students at each school who qualify for free meals.

Research indicates that Latino parents, particularly those with limited formal educational backgrounds tend to have limited experience with, or understanding of ways to negotiate effective institutional pathways for their children to higher education. This

occurs despite data indicating that Latino parents often have high educational aspirations for their children. Inadequate school counseling, due to low funding for counselors and other constraints disadvantage parents without first-hand knowledge of higher education and how to facilitate their children's placement into college preparatory classes (Delgado-Gaitan 1992; Goldenberg and Gallimore 1991).

Eligibility to attend the University of California and California State University campuses depends in large part on students taking required academic courses and performing well in these courses. Historically, few Latino children have been placed into courses that meet the requirements for admission to either system of higher education in California. Table 3 illustrates important differences in curriculum paths for Latino and non-Hispanic white students. Latino student participation in advanced Math or Science classes is much lower than that of non-Hispanic white students. For example, in Fillmore Senior High, 56 percent of white students are in Advanced Math vis-à-vis 33 percent of Latinos. These problems are compounded given that Latinos are by far the majority in all of the schools listed except for Nordhoff. Both populations however, encounter the potent institutional shortcoming presented by an underdeveloped infrastructure for academic excellence, one example of which is the lack of physics classes. This institutional barrier also characterizes hundreds of rural and inner city schools that lack the resources to offer advanced academic coursework and, moreover, corresponds to increasing rates of racial-ethnic segregation in these areas by Latinos and African Americans.

In his study of school segregation, Gary Orfield and his associates (1997) found that in California more than 40 percent of Latino students and 35 percent of African

Americans attend schools where over 90 percent of the students were racial-ethnic minorities. In 1999, the *Los Angeles Times* found that in Ventura County, 14 percent of Latino students attended high school campuses where 90 percent of the enrollment was Black, Latino, and/or Asian (June 12, 1999). Students in the most racially isolated schools are 16 times more likely to be poor than students in nearly all-white, non-Hispanic schools (Orfield et al., 1997). Fillmore and Santa Paula are two examples of schools with limited resources and high racial concentration of rural poor Latinos.

Lacking coursework in advanced Math or Science, less than 5 percent of all Latino high school seniors have the grades, coursework, or SAT scores to be classified as "eligible" to apply for admission to the University of California. This low eligibility rate is not consistent with the basic assumption of the California's Master Plan for Higher

Table 3: 1999–2000 Course Enrollment Data for *ENLACE y Avance* Pipeline Schools

	11th/12th Grade Enrollment Physics	*Intermediate Algebra*		*Advanced Math*		*First-Year Chemistry*		*First-Year Physics*	
Ventura Service Area									
Fillmore Senior									
Latino students	335	222	66%	110	33%	18	5%	0	--
White students	90	75	83%	50	56%	5	6%	0	--
Santa Paula High									
Latino students	505	151	30%	47	9%	40	8%	6	1%
White students	136	47	35%	21	15%	18	13%	6	4%
Nordhoff High									
Latino students	106	16	15%	5	5%	14	13%	4	4%
White students	460	143	31%	80	17%	124	27%	52	11%
Oxnard Service Area									
Channel Islands High									
Latino students	901	140	16%	66	7%	134	15%	39	4%
White students	106	21	20%	15	14%	22	21%	10	9%
Hueneme High									
Latino students	799	152	30%	86	11%	88	11%	21	3%
White students	122	39	32%	31	25%	21	17%	12	10%

*Read as follows: Of the 222 Latino students enrolled in the eleventh and twelfth grade at Fillmore Senior High in 1999–2000, 66% of them enrolled in intermediate algebra, etc.

Education: that the top 12.5 percent of high school graduates statewide should meet the U.C.'s minimum eligibility requirements and the assumption that this top 12.5 percent will equitably represent the population of the state.

In addition to curricular placement in non-academic coursework, Latino students face other institutional limitations that inhibit their access to four-year colleges and universities and preparation for higher education. Namely, their high school graduation rates are significantly lower than for non-Hispanic white students. Inasmuch as all high schools in the present study are four-year schools, their graduation rates should approximate 25 percent of the total enrollment. Table 4 clearly shows that this is not the case. That is, graduation rates for non-Hispanic white students approach 25 percent, but rates for Latino students fall short, in some cases by as much as eleven to thirteen percent.

Table 4 - 1998-1999 Graduation Data for *ENLACE y Avance* Pipeline Schools

	Total Enrollment	*Grads*		*UC/CSU Eligible Grads*		
		#	*% total enr*	#	*% grads*	*% total enr*
Ventura Service Area						
Fillmore Senior						
Latino students	792	127	16%	33	26%	4%
White students	217	50	23%	21	42%	10%
Santa Paula High						
Latino students	1,150	221	19%	56	25%	5%
White students	278	53	19%	24	45%	9%
Nordhoff High						
Latino students	223	26	12%	4	15%	2%
White students	979	197	20%	72	37%	7%
Oxnard Service Area						
Channel Islands High						
Latino students	1,939	322	17%	52	16%	3%
White students	236	41	17%	14	34%	6%
Hueneme High						
Latino students	1,839	255	14%	64	25%	3%
White students	315	65	21%	27	42%	9%

The low graduation rates for Latino students coupled with inadequate academic preparation mitigate against Latino participation in higher education. However, the "open door" admission policy of California's community colleges is designed to provide a second chance for students who do not realize their academic potential in high school. Unfortunately, by and large, the community colleges have been unsuccessful in attracting, retaining, and transferring large numbers of Latino students to four-year institutions. The statewide problem is reproduced locally as well. Table 5 demonstrates the number of students and the low numbers of Latino students who transferred from both Ventura College and Oxnard College to U.C. Santa Barbara and the U.C. system for Fall 1999. Together, both institutions transferred a total of 134 students. Despite the colleges' large Latino enrollments, only 43 of these transfer students were Latino.

Table 5 - Fall 1999 Transfers and Latino Transfers to UCSB and the UC System

	UCSB		*UC*	
	total transfers	*Latino transfers*	*total transfers*	*Latino transfers*
Oxnard College	13	7	32	19
Santa Barbara City College	301	30	396	40
Ventura College	49	13	102	24
TOTAL	363	50	530	83

The above data indicate that California's Latino students are not profiting from the educational structure envisioned by California's Master Plan for Higher Education. The low rates of access to California's four year colleges and universities point to the need to better prepare and place Latino high school students into college-preparatory courses. Community colleges are important avenues for higher education whose potential for Latinos is underdeveloped. Latino students need to be connected to the orientation and matriculation process within the community colleges, in particular, the support and retention services designed to assist them to transfer to four-year institutions.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The educational data in Ventura county point to a number of unmet needs and potential measures that my research collaborators and I explored through a series of interviews with selected school and college administrators as well as local leaders within community based organizations in Ventura County and Latino parents. Each school or community based organization had been identified as potential participants of our research program by the presidents of Ventura and Oxnard colleges, respectively. These interviews identified a number of pressing needs including family literacy, broadly construed as helping Spanish-speaking parents and students to learn to speak, read, and write in English and write in Spanish. Equally pressing to respondents was the need for academic enrichment of students through tutoring, mentoring, and after school programs with an eye to enhancing their academic aspirations as well as their achievements. Guidance through the maze of school curriculum is essential to support Latino students to complete college preparatory classes.

A number of educational leaders and parents voiced concern about the low access to college by Latino students living in some of the more geographically isolated areas. In this regard, increased and earlier exposure to college and career opportunities outside of students' immediate home communities is essential. As the Assistant Superintendent of one rural school district said, "My goal is for all students to think of college as natural as brushing their teeth." Respondents also emphasized the need for increased access to technology to enhance students' and parents' opportunities to learn. This need is supported by national data. As noted in the U.S. Department of Commerce's 1998 report entitled "Trends in Universal Service and Access," Hispanic households are ". . . roughly half as likely to own a computer as white households and nearly 2.5 times less likely to use the Internet . . . Hispanics are less likely to have access from any location (home, school, work, or library) than whites are from home."

Other needs include increased articulation of the K through 12 curriculum and educational equity training for teachers. The most central theme throughout the interviews with school personnel, families, and community-based organizations centered on the importance of increased attention to the family – *la familia* - as a primary locus of support for student educational success. Latino families have a number of structural features (e.g., familism, or reliance on the kinship network for support and information) can lead to the development of stronger communication links between families and schools. The centrality of family and parental involvement is consistent with research indicating that children do best when parents assume the roles of teacher, advocate, supporter, and decision-maker, and that a ". . . comprehensive, well-planned family-school partnership fosters high student achievement" (Harvard Family Research Project, 1997).

Within the Ventura area, there was significant discussion of leadership development centering on the need for: greater systematic involvement by college-educated Latino professionals who can serve as leaders and role models, change at the public policy level, movement of parents into leadership and instructor roles following their successful completion of relevant programs, and diffusion of tension in the non-Hispanic, white community regarding minority community needs. Latino parents and community based organizations discussed the need for a holistic approach to family development, increased participation of Spanish-speaking parents in the schools, and home visits conducted by a full-time, bilingual Parent Liaison in each school district. Latino parents exhibited high awareness of their lack of knowledge of the innerworkings of local schools and articulated a strong desire to learn how to successfully negotiate critical transitions in their children's academic, personal, and social development. Parents are interested in learning how to help their children prepare for college and finding out ways to make this possible.

"ENLACE y Avance": An Alternative Educational Approach

The need to increase opportunities for Latinos/as to enter and complete college through community efforts that strengthen the educational pipeline forms the backdrop for a new research and service delivery program for Ventura County coordinated by Richard Duran, J. Manuel Casas and myself from U.C. Santa Barbara, in collaboration with Ventura and Oxnard colleges. ENLACE y *Avance* is designed to enhance the academic preparation of historically under-served Latino students in selected areas of the county in particular, Oxnard and the Highway 126 corridor that stretches from Ventura College through Santa Paula to the rural isolated regions of Fillmore and Piru. This program has developed a set of educational partnerships to foster family advocacy and increase Latino educational attainment by coordinating existing educational best practices in schools and families.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 1 presents a visual enactment of the educational pipeline as a bridge spanning the "Gulf of Under-Education" which carries students from kindergarten to college graduation. *ENLACE y Avance* has identified structural weaknesses, or challenges, in the bridge's first span (grades K through 8) including literacy, in its second span (grades 9 through 12) including adequate academic preparation and "detracking" to move students into college-preparatory, honors, and advanced courses, and in its third span (community college through University) including provision of effective support and retention services. We also have identified weaknesses in the very material of which the bridge is built (that is, in articulation of the K-16 curriculum) and the way its segments are joined (that is, in the critical transitions between educational segments). Even if these weaknesses are addressed, the bridge will not be sound unless its supports of access to technology and family involvement/parent empowerment are sunk firmly and deeply into place. *ENLACE y Avance*'s research strategies and services will help to shore up the bridge's structural weaknesses, strengthen its fabric and, perhaps most

importantly, ensure its sound foundation through family involvement and parent empowerment.

The overall goals of the research program and service delivery are to provide a systematic means of interrogating the context, implementation, outcomes, and impact of *ENLACE y Avance*. The project goals include: (1) enhancing family involvement and parent empowerment, (2) increasing leadership capacity of students and parents, (3) improving academic achievement, and (4) effecting school-centered, systemic change. These goals are intended to fulfill the overall mission of assisting Latino students in achieving academic excellence and realizing productive and successful college careers. Research on the project is both summative (assessing the extent to which the project achieves its goals) and formative (documenting critical points of intervention).

Expected outcomes of ENLACE with respect to students include: the educational pipeline becomes stronger, Latino/a youth achieve greater academic success and access, high school dropout rates decrease, college application, admission, and enrollment rates increase, and high school and college retention and graduation rates increase.

Rancho Sespe Family Development

Both urban and rural settings present unique social environments to which we must be attentive in developing programs to enhance the educational aspirations and academic preparation of Latino students and families. Rancho Sespe, a community of approximately 150 families working in predominantly agricultural occupations, provides an excellent setting to develop and field test a family-development model of community empowerment. The model offers direct and sustained service to families whose members include parents, grandparents, guardians, infants, pre-schoolers, and students ranging in grade level from kindergarten through college. By working with the entire continuum (ages "0" through seniors), Ventura College assisted by local community agencies, the

mesa directiva [coordinating council]of Rancho Sespe, Fillmore schools, and UCSB, is addressing not only the educational pipeline, but also the broader range of health, welfare, and socioeconomic issues that impact Latino families. In Rancho Sespe we are relying heavily on successful family leadership strategies developed by Future Leaders of America, intensive case management work with "at promise" students undertaken by the Santa Paula Family Resource Center, and augmentation of curricular offerings by Ventura College in the local high school, and ESL classes in community sites. The program in this rural site also draws on outreach programs and services offered by U.C. Santa Barbara to the "low performing, partnership" schools in this area. Simultaneous to implementation of the family-development model, Ventura College is coordinating intensive educational outreach and academic preparation to 11th and 12th grade students in three targeted high schools (Fillmore, Santa Paula, and Nordhoff) with the goal of achieving immediate improvements in college-going rates and time-to-transfer for Ventura College students.

Technology-Based Initiatives for Latino Families

ENLACE y Avance in Oxnard expects to reach large numbers of Latino families through three technology-based initiatives using a medium (television) that Latino families routinely access. The College Outreach and Orientation Program is developing a series of television broadcasts that targets three audiences: English-speaking Latino students of traditional college age, Spanish-speaking Latino students of traditional college age, and Spanish-speaking Latino parents. The videos will provide information on college programs, financial aid, and include motivational narratives by local Latino students. One video currently playing on OCTV presents the most recent college graduation that highlights Latino graduates receiving their diplomas. A new faculty member hired as part of the college's commitment to ENLACE y Avance is coordinating Oxnard's development of visually appealing and culturally sensitive media programming.

The underlying message is to bring the world of the community college to the Latino community with the goal of encouraging students to transfer from Oxnard College to four-year institutions. Other videos encourage Spanish-speaking parents to enroll in Oxnard College ESL courses. This helps build parents' skills and facilitate their travel across the gulf that separates their community from the community college and affirm that higher education is an option for their K-12-aged children. OCTV provides nearly continuous broadcast of these and other videos to a viewing audience of approximately 155,000. In conjunction with the local high schools, community-based agencies and assisted by UCSB, Oxnard College is conducting systematic outreach to under-served groups to encourage enrollment in the college and to link parents' K through 12 aged children with grade-level appropriate college-preparatory resources.

Another educational activity being coordinated by Oxnard College is the Community Technology Consortium. The consortium is a collaborative made up of schools, community-based organizations, and public agencies that have authority for and/or access to computer laboratories and technologies. Through the consortium, members share resources, thereby maximizing their use in developing computer literacy throughout the Latino community. The Life Histories Project is recording local Latina and Latino students, government officials, and community leaders to foster the leadership capacity among Latino youth. Through development of supporting curriculum materials, the life histories process will be incorporated into high school classrooms, where it will assist teachers in generating culturally relevant content and recognizing alternative sources of knowledge. High school students will have the opportunity to produce their own life histories projects and to undertake dual enrollment by completing broadcast media courses at Oxnard College.

In sum, enhancing the educational status of Latinos in Ventura County is the subject of considerable research and service delivery initiatives both locally and nationally. These programs are based on research that demonstrates the need for a

holistic approach that includes institutional change, in particular, improving Latino students' access to college preparatory curriculum and family empowerment initiatives that seek to enhance Latino families' knowledge of effective negotiation strategies within systems of education.

SIGNIFICANCE

ENLACE y Avance has just completed the first year of its four-year implementation program. Thus far, the program has brought together a number of entities, many of which had been unaware of one another's services. In Ventura, school administrators, community activists, parents, and higher education specialists are coordinating existing educational best practices rather than inventing new programs. Perhaps most significant is the development of a provider network that draws on research that emphasizes the untapped potential within Latino families. Viewing Latino children as "at promise" rather than "at risk" as one community agency argues, is one way to rethink the entire educational pipeline.

Utilizing research on Latino family structure and social capital fosters better communication links between families and schools. In Latino communities throughout the county, our emphasis on linking research and practice has facilitated the development of effective educational outreach and family empowerment strategies. Hence, in Rancho Sespe, we use "word of mouth" alongside bilingual flyers to bring families to the college informational workshops held by Ventura College. Knowing the appeal of Spanish-language television, we are seeking to develop visually stimulating educational information videos. Perhaps one of the most underutilized strengths within Latino

families is the high value many attach to education. This quality can be accessed by programs like the leadership camps and workshops of Future Leaders of America to inform parents on effective ways to do educational advocacy for their children.

In sum, building on existing socio-cultural configurations within Latino families, educational improvement can be enhanced to a certain extent. Ultimately, the organization of schooling including academic course availability, curricular placement, academic preparation, counseling, and teacher expectations must change, however, to provide an infrastructure for excellence for Latinos and all students in the county and the state. This proposition may be difficult to realize but is not an impossible dream if the concerned segments of the community work together as a community.

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[1]This paper was prepared for presentation at the Immigration and Changing Face of Rural California Conference, Oxnard, California, April 4-6, 2002. The paper draws on the collaborative educational analysis and service implementation undertaken by Laurie Hoyle, Richard Duran, J. Manuel Casas, Anna Sandoval, Jaime Casillas, Sandra Avalos de Curiel, Marcos Lupian, Norma Perez-Sandford, Gil Cuevas, and more recently, Claudia Martinez. This research has been funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the University of California Committee on Latino Research, and U.C. Santa Barbara's Chancellor's Outreach Advisory Board. Denise A. Segura is Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She can be contacted at segura@soc.ucsb.edu.

[2] Social capital theories guide a growing amount of research on achievement gaps between populations in the U.S. (e.g., Coleman 1990, Kao and Tienda 1998). For Coleman (1990), social capital is made up on connections that may be convertible into children's cognitive or social development. Social capital theory encourages researchers to address social networks and social interaction within families, peers, and schools that may be difficult to measure, but can reveal important processes contributing to educational inequality.

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